

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2005

**EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH HAS THE POTENTIAL
TO HELP AMERICANS WHO ARE SUFFERING FROM**
AUTISM

Dear Colleague:

This is the second in a series of Dear Colleagues that we are sending to provide you and your staff with information about the promise of embryonic stem cell research. Scientists believe that over 100 million Americans may one day be cured of or treated for their debilitating disease through discoveries and treatments from embryonic stem cell research.

One example is autism, a complex brain disorder that surfaces during the first three years of life. The symptoms of the disease include difficulty interacting with others, difficulty speaking and communicating, obsessive attachment to routines and repetition, and an extreme dislike of certain sounds, textures and tastes. There is no known single cause for autism and there is no universally accepted therapy or cure. The general belief is that abnormal brain structure or function causes the disease.

Currently in the United States, 1.5 million children and adults have some form of autism; it is now more common among children than cancer and Down's syndrome. It is estimated that autism will cost the U.S. economy some \$90 billion dollars next year.

The use of embryonic stem cell lines in autism research will allow scientists to test the efficacy and safety of new drugs without human involvement. Since autism is common in children, it is especially important to determine toxicity of a new drug or treatment. Embryonic stem cell research may provide an exact model of an organ or tissue for research without compromising the health of these young patients.

To learn more about the promise of embryonic stem cell research or to cosponsor our legislation, H.R. 810, the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act," please contact Elizabeth Wenk with Rep. Castle (5-4165) or Meghan Taira with Rep. DeGette (5-4431) or visit our stem cell website: <http://www.house.gov/castle/Castle%20DeGette%20ESCR.html>.

Sincerely,



Michael Castle
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress